User Research Report:
Hilton Hotels

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Introduction & Executive Summary

Key stakeholders have reached out to the Hilton User Experience (UX) Team looking for information and insight that will help them achieve identified business goals.

In order to provide the stakeholders with the information and insight they need to determine potential optimizations for the Hilton website, the UX Team recruited participants, conducted user research interviews, and have discovered the following:

- Travelers are more likely to sign up for loyalty programs when benefits are made clear.
- Travelers are more likely to sign up for loyalty programs when multiple hotel chain locations are available in the areas they want to travel.
- Travelers are more likely to sign up for loyalty programs if there are no hidden or annual fees.
- Those that travel for both business and leisure prioritize location and transportation most when booking their stay.
- If the web experience is not optimal for comparing prices, reviews, and amenities, users will leave the site and look to another hotel chain or Airbnb to book their stay.

Business Goals

Stakeholders' top three priorities:

- What do business travelers look for, want, and need when evaluating properties and choosing a room to book and why.
- What do leisure travelers look for, want, and need when evaluating properties and choosing a room to book, why.
- Why (and why don't) people sign up for the loyalty program?

Research Objectives & Method

The UX Team performed user research interviews to help provide the stakeholders with the information and insight they need to determine potential optimizations for the Hilton website. By conducting user research interviews, we were able to determine common themes, pain points, and booking priorities to influence how to best optimize the Hilton website.

Participants

Six participants were recruited to interview and observe. Recruitment of individuals was based on established demographics and current analytic reports.

Preferred participant criteria:

- Has familiarity with making a hotel reservation
- Has traveled for business
- Over the age of 25
- All genders
- Is comfortable using a smartphone or desktop computer

Participant information:

Name	Age	Gender	Location	Education	Race
Cristina	30	Female	Queens, NY	Master's	Mixed, Asian & White
Alexandra	33	Female	Queens, NY	Master's	Other, Middle Eastern
Adam	33	Male	Ann Arbor, MI	B.A.	White
Robynn	67	Female	Ann Arbor, MI	B.A.	White
Andrew	30	Male	Fairview Park, OH	B.A., PMP	White
Jane	62	Female	LaGrange, OH	Associate's	White

Method

The UX team conducted remote user research interviews via Zoom. A user research interview is a method of discovering what works well for a website, application or device, and what is not working well and needs improvement.

Research Themes and Questions

Stakeholder Goals	Research Themes and Questions
Increase business traveler reservations	What do business travelers look for, want, and need when evaluating properties and choosing a room to book and why.
Increase leisure traveler reservations	What do leisure travelers look for, want, and need when evaluating properties and choosing a room to book and why.
Increase customer loyalty program enrollment during the reservation flow	Why (and why don't) people sign up for the loyalty program?

Schedule

The table below provides a schedule of activities by week.

Activity	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Project kickoff	X			
Participant recruiting	X	X		
Individual interviews		X		
Analyze results			X	
Report on results			X	
Results presentation				X

Results

Below are the high-level findings found for each of the business goals. A detailed affinity diagram, which is a tool that organizes data into their natural relationships, can be found in the appendix of this report.

What do business travelers look for, want, and need when evaluating properties and choosing a room to book and why.	What do leisure travelers look for, want, and need when evaluating properties and choosing a room to book, why.	Why (and why don't) people sign up for the loyalty program?
Travel for business 1-3 times per year	Travel domestically and internationally 1-5 times per year	Fees deter participants from signing up
Travel for conferences or meetings	Book based on reviews, amenities, and price	Do not travel enough to warrant signing up
Book based on reviews, amenities, and price	Prefer packaged deals	Are more enticed to sign up if they receive discounts or free stays

Proximity to the conference/meeting is important	Proximity to the city center and transportation is important	
Usability of the site impacts booking experience	Usability of the site impacts booking experience	

Recommendations

Based on these results, we recommend Hilton Hotel consider the following:

- Make the benefits of joining the loyalty program well known to users, not just included in the checkout process
- Be transparent about hidden and/or annual fees
- Phrase the loyalty program benefits in a way that makes it seem beneficial whether you travel once per year, or 20 times a year
- Provide comparison tools for users to compare rooms by price, reviews, and amenities
- Provide proximity tools to inform users of how close the hotel is to local attractions and transportation

Appendix

Group 10 Affinity diagram

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Why (and why don't) people sign up for the loyalty program?

Not Enrolled

- Not enrolled in a loyalty program
- Not enrolled in a loyalty program
- Not enrolled in a loyalty program
- Not enrolled in a loyalty program
- Not enrolled in a loyalty program

Fees

- Membership annual fees. Restrictions, such as blackout dates. Do not want contract-based commitment.
- Payments involved prior to using the benefits of the loyalty program.
- Any kind of fees. If they weren't giving out rewards. If she could not see and concrete/tangible rewards and feedback.
- Annual fees on card. Not getting great value or traveling enough to get the accommodations I was looking to get. Annual fees > value.
- Hidden fees

Do Not Travel Enough

- Not travel enough. No specific hotel interest. Look at prices first.
- Does not travel enough.
- Haven't travelled much in the last year. Primarily stay in Airbnbs not hotels.

Discount/Free Rooms

- Large discount and the ability to easily cancel. Was willing to pay a little more to avoid too many emails.
- At check-in was notified that as a loyalty member she was able to cut her hotel bill in half upon check-in. Participant did not believe the price would have been investigated if her friend had not been flagged as a loyalty member.
- Would likely have a credit card that would earn me points to get free stays and accommodations that would incentivize me to sign up.

Misc.

- I can take full advantage of a hotel program because I do travel a lot and it's on my agenda to find a hotel. Nice to have a choice in places you normally couldn't stay at because they're out of reach price wise.
- Too many emails.
- Use loyalty program for travel. It's nice to have the option to go to a location where I may have points to redeem for free rooms.
- Enrolled in a loyalty program: American Express - Marriott

No Preferred Chain

- Don't use any particular hotel more than others. Select hotels based on where traveling, what's convenient in the area. Don't stick with one hotel and points don't make sense.
- I never stayed at a particular hotel enough.

Preferred Chain/Multiple Locations

- Flexibility. Worried about changes in plans and dates. Not getting charged for additional occupancy. Perks. Locations anywhere in the world, available in all continents and major cities.
- Enroll for a hotel that would frequent often. Consider type of loyalty benefits. Understand how the benefits work, such as discounted rates. Easily accessible, which means hotel has numerous locations around the world.

What do business travelers look for, want, and need when evaluating properties and choosing a room to book and why.

Travels for Business

- 2-3 times a year normally, pre-pandemic.
- Once or twice a year, pre-pandemic.
- Once or twice and year, pre-pandemic.
- Three times a year, pre-pandemic.
- Travel once a year for work

Conferences or Meetings

- Mostly weeklong conferences. Large meetings. Both domestic and international.
- Typically for conferences. Overnight out-of-state stay.
- Meetings. Meeting pre-covid and generally would be booked by host store.
- Overnight-week long conferences both in and out of state.
- Travel for work meetings
- Meetings, conferences, trainings

Review & Price Based Booking

- Go to Kayak for price comparisons. Book hotel and flight separately. Book most economical options and most feasible based on location. Free cancellation option. Internet is a big deal. Read reviews which impact decision.
- Compiles prices from different booking websites. Easy to compare. Sort by price. Like the filters available. Photos are important to check what the hotel looks like. There are public reviews. Key information are displayed and upfront.
- Would like to see some reviews of the rooms. Currently unavailable in the website. If do not know the hotel brand, would need reviews to impact decision. Would google for reviews for unfamiliar hotels.
- Look at google maps. From there look at google reviews. Google does a nice job of providing you with appropriate booking options right there when you click on the hotel that you like.
- If the reviews are poor, I wouldn't book that particular hotel. Most websites are pretty good these days but I like to see the lock "secure" symbol when using a credit card to know it's a secure website and makes me feel more comfortable

Amenity & Price Based Booking

- Looking for basic amenities. Such as Wi-Fi and complimentary breakfast.
- Immediately checked for price then proceeded to compare amenities. Made choice based on price and amenities. Willing to pay more for a few amenities.
- Looks first at photos displayed for each hotel. Then compares what she could get for more money by clicking on Hotel Details. She compare amenities and then searches for the pricing to compare her options.
- Looking for strong, fast Wi-Fi, pen, notepad, table/chair, hair dryer, coffee pot, empty refrigerator in room.

Usability & Features

- Confusing ads. Very busy website. A lot of information. Results will be different sometimes which can be frustrating because not getting consistent information.
- Appreciate the photos of the actual room. Full list of amenities. Colors are not too bright. Easy to navigate. Straight forward. Like the chat feature, don't want to be stuck on the phone.
- Liked that the photos were shown right away and she could visually weed out anything that would make her uncomfortable, she also like that the amenities were easy to see and included photos.
- Easy to use. Photos next to each option. Amenities are easy to see with clear icons.

Company Books/Company Policies in Place

- Work provides list of hotels. Google for what is closest to the venue. Go to actual hotel website.Look for Wifi. For reimbursements, ensure within parameters for work approval. Proceed booking within the hotel website.
- Meetings. Meeting pre-covid and generally would be booked by host store.
- For work purposes it's done through the company. They choose for us so we do not have flexibility in booking our own travel for work.
- Company books for me. It's nice to have the company handle all of the logistics.

Proximity to Conference/Meeting

- Super close where need to be. Location is important, because don't want to be far from work and save money from taking the taxi. Economical option. Stay within budget.
- Close to the work site or where conference is being held. If conference is already located in the hotel, stay within the hotel. If work company has partnerships that allows for discounts with the hotel, then would choose the hotel.
- Location to the meeting/conference is a primary factor. Within tolerance for travel I look for highest rated/reviewed hotel and choose from there.

Misc.

- Any smell, too many noise disruptions.
- Frustration: time consuming. During the workday when I'd be looking at the hotels to book, takes up quite a bit of time and effort to do so.
- Don't stay at hotels for work currently. Have stayed in hotels in the past. Traveled fairly frequent in the past.

What do leisure travelers look for, want, and need when evaluating properties and choosing a room to book and why.

Travels for Leisure

- One domestic, one international per year.
- Four times a year.
- Three times per year, pre-pandemic.
- Once or twice per year
- Once or twice per year.
- Fives times a year.

Visit New City/Country

- Mixed, mostly visit a new city or country never been. Balance between weeklong sight-seeing and weekend all-inclusive beach resort.
- Travels internationally to experience new cultures. City exploration.
- City exploration. Both international and domestic.
- City exploration, beach resorts, traveling to different countries.

Review & Price Based Booking

- Same reasons as the business travel using Kayak - prices comparisons, filters available, public reviews, key information displayed.
- Start with Kayak, then hotels.com. For hotel, check prices on Kayak and call hotel to confirm prices. Check if package is available. For flight+hotel packages, filter by number of flight stops, price.
- Usually use Expedia. Look within price range. Filter down hotel ratings. Look at location. Like to know if restaurants are offered within and around the hotel. Proximity to transit. Reviews play a big role, especially if not familiar with the area.
- If a hotel has a bad review or is high priced compared to the price point I was looking for. I'd consider other options such as Airbnb or something similar to that
- Google does a good job of providing you with various options. Allows you to look at different reviews. Feel like I'm making an informed decision when I book my hotel.
- Price to review ratio. Looking for good value and location. Price seems to be good value compared to the reviews.

Amenity Based Booking

- Using hilton.com Adam compared three hotels in his price range. Checked and compared amenities. Made choice based on price and amenities.Was willing to pay more for a few amenities.
- He will look first at amenities. Would want amenities for all travel companions such as a pool, play room/arcade, lounge area, on-site restaurant, room service.
- Using hilton.com looks at *hotel details*, then goes to amenities and price. Looks for amenities but considers spending more money on hotel instead on exploration.
- 24/7 restaurant, indoor pool needs excellent ventilation and gym. In addition to the needs she has for business trip.
- Go to airbnb and type in the city I will be travelling to. Put in the things that I need, number of people travelling with, how many bedrooms, bathrooms, etc.

Usability & Features

- Same reasons as the business travel using Kayak - confusing ads, very busy website.
- No chat feature. Annoying to see ads on the side; find it distracting. Need to re-orient self. Lots of things going on the page where attention starts to shift to other things, such as certain ads that are not applicable, some details misplaced like activities to do.
- Able to scan pictures for a quick look without going into the specific hotel. All the filters available, such as ratings, type of location, amenities. Quick and easy to navigate. Like the layout. Appreciate the map to help explore the area where going.
- Easy to use. Photos next to each option. Amenities are easy to see with clear icons.
- She liked that the photos were shown right away and she could visually weed out anything that would make her uncomfortable. She liked that the amenities were easy to see and included photos.
- Any technical complications would make her move on to different booking site quickly.

Packaged Deals

- Try to book flight and hotel as a package but can be tricky, so usually book separately. High standard for hotel, including free wifi, breakfast, location near central area/city, mass transit. Flexible check-in and check-out. Can hold bags after check-out.
- Start with Expedia or google best hotels in the area. Look for flight and hotel package. In the results section, use filters available: star ratings, guest ratings, reviews, price range. See available transportation. Check reviews and photos.

Misc.

- Visits with friends and disc golfing trips. Disc golf trips include multiple hotels as they travel to different locations on each trip. These trips only include males.
- Any smell, too many noise disruptions.

Proximity to Main Location / Transportation

- It depends. Visit friends in different cities, but may not stay in a hotel. For more international travel, would be looking more for accommodations near entertainment, cultural attractions, sightseeing.
- Google – research the area to figure out itinerary for trip and pick a hotel that is in a suitable location that also has a decent price point that would suit my needs.
- Whenever I travel whether I do Airbnb or hotels I want to know the best location in the city is right there at my fingertips. Transportation, restaurants, places I want to see. Everything is close by.
- Location, if it's not within the area I want to be in. Not having the amenities I would need. Not within walking distance to the places I want to see. Public transportation. I want all of that at my fingertips.
- Frustration: getting exact locations and distances between certain things I might want to see or do. Sometimes it takes more digging with both hotel and Airbnb.

KEY

John	Participant 1	Participant 2
Juliette	Participant 3	Participant 4
Ali	Participant 5	Participant 6

Research Theme

Subcategory

Research Protocol

Below is the moderator's guide and script utilized in order to better understand how people book their hotel stays and whether or not they are part of a hotel loyalty program.

Section	Moderator's Script and Test Tasks
Introduction	*Moderator guidance:* - *Don't forget to start recording.* *Read to participant:* Thanks for agreeing to take part in this study session. We're doing what's called a user research session. It's a method of discovering what people want and need from a product or service. REMOTE SESSION: Before we start, I'd like to ask permission to record our zoom session. It will be for internal use only and none of our session recordings will be made public. If you are okay with this, I'll ask for your verbal consent to proceed. *Provide form to participant to sign or read form to participant and ask for verbal consent.* *- - START RECORDING - -* *Read to participant:* I'd like you to verbalize what you're thinking, any past experiences you found confusing or helpful, and even how you feel about the process in general. I also want you to feel free to ask questions, but I may not answer your questions immediately. This is because we want to understand how you feel about each scenario. Do you have any questions for me before we start?

Enroll in loyalty program	Are you enrolled in any hotel loyalty rewards programs? P: Why (or why not)? P: What do you want in a loyalty program? P: What are some deal breakers? P:

Book for business	How often do you travel for business/work? P: What type of business/work do you travel for (for example, conferences, meetings, on-site visits)? P: What things do you initially look for when booking a hotel reservation for business or work purposes? Why? P: Show me or walk me through how you would book a hotel reservation that will accommodate your needs for your trip. P: What do you like about the site you are using? P: What are some deal breakers? P:

Book for leisure	How often do you travel for leisure? P: What type of leisure activities do you travel for (for example, cruise, city exploration, beach resorts)? P: What things do you initially look for when booking a hotel reservation for leisure? Why? P: Show me or walk me through how you would book a hotel reservation that will accommodate your needs for your trip. P: What do you like about the site you are using? P: What are some deal breakers? P:
Wrap-up	*Read to participant:* We're all done with the session. I really appreciate you participating in this session. Do you have any questions for me at this point? Anything you want to add related to these questions? P: